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Social Movements against Gold Mining

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are to study 1) the framing process of the social movements against mining in Northeastern Thailand and 2) the impact of the social movements. Two social movements were purposely selected for the study, namely the movement against potash mine in Udonthani province and the movement against gold mine in Loei province. Qualitative and comparative case study was used. Data were collected by means of in-depth interview and participant and non-participant observation. The data of the two cases were then compared and analyzed for their similarities and differences before the final conclusions were drawn.

The research has adopted the collective action framing tasks proposed by Snow and Benford to study the framing process. These include diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing. Regarding diagnostic framing, “injustice frames” was identified, which confirmed previous studies. In addition, this research was able to identify two other important diagnostic framings shared by the two cases under study, one being the state’s development policy biased towards industrial development that is against agricultural development and rural people’s way of life, and the other being the alliance between the state and the private sector. Based on these three diagnostic frames, two levels of corresponding prognostic framing were made. The movement demanded that the state make structural reform through the amendment of the mining law and changed unfair mining concession terms. At the local level, movement representatives stood for local government elections with the aims to make local structural reforms, tackle monopoly problems, and change local development policies. As for the motivational framing, the vocabularies used to mobilize movement participation were “disastrous mining” and “dangerous impact” to warn against the severity and urgency of the problems, while putting forward the “community culture” discourse as a mobilizing tool.

With regards to the movement impact, the research found that the social movements against mining in Northeastern Thailand could not discontinue or cease the mining projects. However, the movements were able to delay the concession and the mining expansion processes. The delays were interpreted as the movement’s success and victory by movement leaders and supporters.

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Introduction

This article explains the process of social movement against gold mining conceptual framework construction. In addition, data have been collection based on years 2001-2011. It has also been analyzed and studied from *Social Movement against Mining in Northeastern Thailand* (Supee Samorna, 2007) during 2010-2012. Moreover, collective action framing has also been conducted throughout diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing which is a conceptual framework process theory of Snow and Benford (Snow & Benford, 1992).

Generally, classic and popular questions amongst social movement analysis and activists are about the kinds of scrutinizing process and how to access the truth of social movement. Although many mechanisms to analyze its process in the past decade have tried, it still is disable to achieve new social movement's truth. For the last few decades, there are many thematic studies about social movement process. Normally, those studies have been questioning about what are the key factors of original social movement processing. A trouble, affliction, and exploitation of people are significant keys findings which are seen in common reasons of Collective Behaviour Theory. Additionally, for the last ten years, there are some studies regarding the explanation of strategic planning movements. The success of collective resources which is directly related to Resource Mobilization Theory is the regular core findings. These two theories' point of views has not differentiated from the New Social Movement Theory. It implies the capable accessibility of trouble people in explanation which is focusing on areas of lives and new meaning for such movements (Chiarat Charoensin imposing, 1997). However, New Social Movement Theory is the same as Collective Behaviour Theory and Resources Mobilization Theory in structural analysis. Significantly, there is an abandonment of key player of social movement as individual. This phenomenon is backward to new social movement processing justification. Furthermore, it is not possible to get individual analysis, including its thoughts, belief, attitude, and constructing of struggle meaning which is the means micro level analysis as well as social movement areas of practices.

Eventually, being unable to access basis social movement is a problem of the analysis. In the midst of complicated struggle movement adjustment, somehow, there are two shortcomings since the last decade. Firstly, individual thoughts, belief, and attitudes have been neglected from its explanation. Secondly, later on, situations or upcoming processes have not been derived from resources mobilization theory only; it was also deduced from a new meaning construction for challenges, claim, and event communication of movement as named "*meaning of struggle*". Therefore, the old relevant theories of social movement explanation particularly focus on structural analysis and neglected individual analysis which is inadequate to social movement understanding neither. The situations have arrived later such as Assembly of the Poor, Local Fisherman movement, indigenous movement, students' movement, the People's Alliance for Democracy, Paak Mun Dam Against movement, Disability People Movement, Environmental Movement, Movement of Santi Asoka Group etc. (Phasuk Phongpaichit, 2000) and (Maniemai Thongyoy, 2009) Social Movement Against Mining (Supee Samorna, 2012). All of these are mostly different from the social movement in the past. For instance, there are complicating developed issues, struggle movement modules relations to social interactive regularly. Importantly, new meaning construction of challenges has been generating. Therefore, comprehending of conscious, and idealistic players at an individual level as "*collective thoughts process*" as the social movement practitioners defined is not simple.

However, the understanding of social movement in terms of collective struggle thoughts since the past scholars has paid less attention to many post-social movements that have taken place. In fact, there is only the study of mind framing process of the People's Alliance for Democracy (U-Chain Chiangsaen, 2008). It also explains about mobilizing people to political movement. Nevertheless, most scholars have tried to conclude such framework that can be fitted to social movement concept, particular in basis movement derived from communities and their natural resources usage conflict.

Based on situations and circumstances above, these are regarded as uncertainty and doubt which must have not been default in any terms. The author, as a result, has started studying on "*Social Movement Against Mining in Northeastern Thailand*" (Supee Samorna, 2012). Moreover, the author has paid attention to collective action frame of Social Movement against Gold Mining. It means to clearly answers according to collective movement

processed throughout individual level in order to get intensive and long paths and ways struggle. Significantly, Mind Framing Process Theory of Snow and Benford would have been applied for being used as analysis guidance which explains basis social movement. Unfortunately, in the Thai academic era, it has been unsuccessful in terms of mid framing process practices.

Methodology

Based on Snow & Benford, Mind Framing Process Theory has been referred to explain social situations mentioned above. The author has selected areas of study in particular and usage qualitative research methods to access the truth of circumstance; data have been collected throughout in-depth interview and both non-participatory and participatory observation. All data proceeding would have been analyzed and concluded in terms of theory.

Regarding the area of study, a village name (unreal named) Baan Naa Charoen, Wangsaphung district, Loei province was selected. This village and its surrounding are targeted and projected from government such as mining industrial policy, and government also gave concession to private company for gold mining since 2000. Its severance tax as income generating from gold mining will contribute to national economy. As a result, the village community as fertilized land and gain of mining resources has been targeted for company concession as well as locality that have taken advantages. There are some traditional ways of living by confronting the external modernization. Obviously, local people standing up for governmental policy challenges and form up their group named “*Local Conservation Group*” which has been set up for facing government projects. Moreover, the study area as projected area of mining industry policy from government along with local people rising for natural resources conservation struggle intensively and complicatedly causes the author to select this village in terms of study area.

Social Movement against Gold Mining

Social movement against gold mining is a movement derived from the national policies impacts which governmentally shift agricultural towards industrial country. The mining resources will have been foundation to make economic growth eventually.

As long as mining development mandated by government, heavy investments of mining industry have been occurring. Since 2005, Baan Naa Charoen is a part of the country that is targeted to strategic planning areas, and then the private company got concession from the government, dead forests, dusts amidst the village; fish died; people got rash; environmental degrade rapidly. Local people are in trouble, and eventually people themselves group and set up name “*Local Conservation Group*” in order to resist gold mining project in surrounding villages during 2005 - 2012. Based on experiences of people movement, there can be categorized into two periods. Firstly, collective thoughts stage (2005-2007), local people themselves engaged and collected thoughts from internal, raising problems, issues related, and its impacts on their livelihoods, health, and environment. Secondly, learning by fighting stage (2008-2011), people get external people involved, seek alliance, and network people for empowering movement.

The movement has been practicing through environmental platforms for public communication to identify problems and issues related. Additionally, public sphere means to reflect the local people’ values of wisdom which is the main factors for people livelihood and eventually exist autonomous of self-government. Consequently, resisting injustice regulation, refusing livelihood and environment separation based concession, and claiming government responsibilities based mining project are issues which the group has addressed and raised since then. Obviously, three keys issues addressed imply the policy structure problems as well as the imbalance and injustice natural resources management from the government sector. Hence, Social Movement against Gold Mining has been occurring from governmental control over local natural resources conditionally as well as its conflict amongst government, capitalist, and people who have benefited from natural resources utilization inequality.

Mind Framing Process of Social Movement against Gold Mining

During 2001-2011, the author has studied and analyzed data from research conducting named *“Social Movement Against Mining in Northeastern Thailand”* (Supee Samorn, 2012). It illustrates that in the midst of take over and control over access of natural resources by government, local people have stood up and resisted such project through three collective action frames such as diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing (Snow & Benford, 1992) more details in ordinary.

Diagnostic Framing

Diagnostic framing has been created for clearly figuring people problems taken places in some areas, especially in the original key factors affecting community and people livelihoods. Based on the author, under crisis facing, diagnostic methods found that *“injustice”* (Benford & Snow, 2000) is deduced from government and capitalist performing. Consequently, proceeding of discussion, brain storming, and community consensus are the process of diagnostic farming process practiced (Benford & Snow, 2000) as explained below.

1. Problem of Injustice in Natural Resources Management by Government

Regarding injustice in natural resources management by government, movement processing has been signifying throughout mining regulation and its concessional agreements. First of all, based on *Social Movement Against Mining in Northeastern Thailand* (Supee Samorna, 2012), the study found that mining regulation is a key root of people troubles; local people have seen injustice natural resources management caused by central law enforcement to control over local natural resources. The government itself has completely occupied mineral as *“Mine belongs to Government”*, and it can be transferred to somebody else such as concession to groups of investors. In fact, gold mining projected is also the best example of the government taking advantages of local people by external firms whose rights ensuring from power of government and capital instead. Therefore, locals have been deprived of their rights to access natural resources by laws. This inequity issue is raised by the locals to protest against the project.

Similarly, the concession contract is judged by the locals as *“a special concession contract”* issued by the government to concessionaire groups. In other words, the concessionaires are privileged with exclusive monopoly on the long term using mineral resources. This results in the locals losing their rights on accessing natural resources in this area. In fact, the special concession contract is as an investment incentive used by the government. It attracts investors with a long term exploitation and monopoly on mineral resources. Therefore, it can widely increase investment in mining industry. However, based on this study, it was revealed that to manage the mineral resources in this way deprives locals' rights over local's resources while the privilege to exploit the resources is confined exclusively to concessionaire groups. This contributes to inequity in mineral resource management.

This study also reflects benefits from the use of mineral resources in economic development in an inequitable way. That is, mining companies and the government earn huge amount of profit from exploiting tremendous mineral resources while the locals not only gain just a few benefits from royalty but also suffer the impact of environmental deterioration on health, way of life and community culture.

2. *The impractical development policy enforcement against locals' way of life and communities issue*

Gold Mining Project, a development policy applied to Baan Naa Charoen causes locals trouble, is unmatched with social context. It is one of the national developments that the government try to shift Thailand from an agricultural nation to an industrial country. Large-scale mining project investment in all regions has been aggressively encouraged, and mineral resource is regarded as a fundamental of economic growth. Based on locals' perspectives, the policy of replacement agricultural convention by industrialization will harm rather than benefit their way of life. It is because this policy stresses on industrial development which responds to capitalists' demand while overlooking agriculture regarded as community foundation. As a result of mining investment encouragement policy, local's resources will be intensively used more in industrial and economic activities. It will also destroy way of life and community. In the case of Baan Naa Charoen, mining activity results in many of the community's members losing their traditional way of life, water pollution, damaged paddy fields and locals' ill health.

Because of the big gold mine project at Ban Na Charoen, for the villagers it is a strange thing to have nothing that harmonizes with their way of life and community. It is because 90 per cent of community's members still mainly depend on agricultural production for their existence. Many households are still engaged in rice and crop farming as well as raising livestock. Moreover, most of them still rely on natural resources in the mine's area such as forest, herbs and other products, which some of them have been already removed for construction. Thus, becoming industrial country policy and determining/using local natural resources as an economic development strategic area are a foreign matter and problem for Baan Naa Charoen is not beneficial to the locals.

3. *The collusion and collaboration between government and capitalist issue*

The collusion and collaboration between the government and concessionaires issue is found since Ban Na Charoen is determined as a target area for a national large-scale gold mine operation. That is, the government that is in charge of supporting and facilitating mining industry collaborates with concessionaires who focus on gaining a maximum profit from mineral resources to possess and exploit resources together by doing that, refers to the legitimacy of "*investment fostering*". Moreover, they depend on institutional structure from the top, policy level, to the bottom, local level, to support them in achieving all procedures and regulations such as concession license, survey, and mining operation and so on.

Locals demonstrate the relationship of government and capitalists, which indicated that the government greatly contributes to concessionaires' benefits. The government that is responsible for natural resource conservation not only disregards to preserve the resources but also intrigues and collaborates with concessionaires to take advantage of them; for example, designing policies to support concessionaire groups, offering concessionaires being part of committee members working with the government officials, offering concessionaire representatives being mining industry consultants working for the government, authorizing concessionaires a monopoly on mine survey and operating with the long term (a special concession), tax relaxing and exemption, research and experimenting relevant mineral industry invested by government for an investment incentive. For concessionaire groups, their close relationship with the government and their financial power greatly contribute to their business running smoothly.

The locals consider and believe that their grievance is arisen from benefit on the local resources issue. In other words, common interest between the government and concessionaire groups is the main cause of their difficulty. This study also mentions that the investment promoting measure to attract concessionaire groups deprives the locals of their rights to access and preserve natural resources due to the monopoly in resource management by the government. Hence, this movement exclusively promotes concessionaire groups' business to be expanded and developed.

Solution Frame

Referring to the movement of scrutinizing causes of problem, the movement conducts a brainstorming session to seek a problem solving way which harmonizes with problem analysis and solution frames (Benford & Snow, 2000).

The movement presents solutions for the purpose of making any changed and meeting with locals' requirement focusing on solving an inequity in mineral resource management, wrong development policy and the collusion and collaboration between the government and concessionaires. For solution approaches, the movement mentions about structural reform both national and local structures. The national structure can be reformed by amending mining acts to be more equitable for the locals. This means that mineral resources should belong to public property. In addition, the concession contract should also be revised to limit or reduce the scale of monopoly power. In terms of the local structure, representatives should be authorized to work in local government agencies to address the collusion and collaboration between government and concessionaires. Also, policy adjustment is mentioned. Policy makers should take into account community rights on mineral resource management, traditional way of life as well as self-sufficiency.

Motivation Frame

After the movement analyzes the problem and presents practical solutions for bringing in wide movement on this issue and the success, the movement persuades the locals by bringing up two issues relevant to mining industry, namely "*Catastrophe of Mine*" and "*The Violent Effect*". These issues have been linked to locals' way of life such as rice, fish, water, forest, belief and spirit in order to demonstrate what the effect of the mine project on their way of life is, and illustrate how the impact of the mine project can do serious harm on their daily life, community way of life, health and the environment.

In addition, "*Way of Community Culture*" is also raised. It is a cultural power existing in community, which is used for gathering locals against capitalism that is full of power, and technology and capital that exploit natural resources. Public mobilizations, by applying community culture concept, can be worked through community traditions and rites that take place throughout the year, such as ordaining trees, prolonging the mountain life and so forth.

Conclusion

This article builds the reader's understanding in three main points. First, the status of the social movement knowledge focuses on framing dimension. Specifically, whole time changeable movement rises from individual conscious, belief, value and ideology which are the complex field work of social movement. This is regarded as a stepping stone on the previous analysing frame to the new one. The old analyzing frame defined public participation in the process through materials (resource mobilization theory). Or it might be because of the condition of no thinking (a theory of group behaviour). Second, the study on the movement of making a concept idea of social movement against the gold mine project is explained by the theory of framing processes by Snow & Benford. It demonstrates public aggregation through building performance framework together such as locals build a fighting framework against the government by identifying their problems also solutions; and calling the public into action by provoking. To build this framework, "inequity" also mentions as a core cause of the problem. The harmonious solution derived from problem analyzing and solution frames is presented. Lastly, this study reflects the fact that government's old development paradigm, which believes that many villagers should sacrifice resources to the government for national economic and industrial development as well as civilization is no longer true. In other words, when villagers suffer from troubles, they can build a fighting frame to disprove government's belief and any conditions assigned. The process can develop its strength and make any changed inside the movement to always respond to the government's activities.

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